

# HEREFORD WORLD

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# Making Gains

*Ty Bevan of Nick Mountain Ranch says Hereford bulls have improved his cow herd and his profitability.*

by Sara Gugelmeyer

It's making a difference, Ty Bevan says. Since reincorporating Hereford bulls into the breeding program at his family's Nick Mountain Ranch, Molina, Colo., he's seen improvements in weaning weights, calf survivability and cow longevity.

Ty's family has been in the ranching business in the high mountain country east of Grand Junction, Colo., since the 1800s. His wife, Carrie (Nichols), comes from a family that has been ranching in the same area for a century as well. After graduating with a business degree from Western State College, Gunnison, Colo., Ty went to work managing a ranch in the area.

"I took care of a ranch for some people that had started with a pretty good set of Hereford cows then threw



**"The main advantage to those Hereford bulls is our cows' longevity."**

— Ty Bevan

some black bulls in there," Ty explains. "Those calves were tremendous."

So when Ty returned to his in-laws' operation where his father-in-law had a nice set of black cows, there was no question in his mind. They went Hereford bull shopping.

Ty and Carrie are the owners and operators of Nick Mountain Ranch now, since Carrie's father has passed away. They also manage their 300-350 cows on some of Ty's family's place along with using U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management permits. Their calves are marketed through Superior and they retain 30 to 70 heifers each year for replacements. Ty and Carrie are raising their three young children to love the ranching lifestyle as well.

### Losing heterosis

The cows that Ty's father had were good cows, but after many years of using Angus bulls only, the black baldie cows were eventually replaced with straight black ones. These cows had lost the value heterosis provides in a cow herd. That loss of heterosis created

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The goal is to maximize the benefits of the Hereford x Angus cross on the Nick Mountain Ranch, by breeding red cows to black bulls and black and black baldie cows to Hereford bulls.

a situation for Hereford bulls to turn things around.

"I really think that the black baldie females have made a huge difference for us," Ty says. "We had a few to begin with and they were our best cows."

Knowing that the cow herd base was lacking heterosis, Ty bought two good Hereford bulls from Sidwells, Carr, Colo. "We bred our heifers to them," Ty explains. "We wanted our best genetics, our heifers, to make these types of females so we bred them to calving ease Hereford bulls."

So impressed were Ty and Carrie with the calves, and no calving trouble either, that Ty has bought more and more Hereford bulls from Sidwells and other breeders across the West. Now, they keep about eight in their bull battery.

"We've probably got close to 40 head of cows that are red whiteface cows and we breed those to black bulls, but we try to put Herefords back on all the black and black baldie cows," Ty says.

#### Improved profitability

Hereford bulls are helping Ty's profitability. Because Ty and Carrie's summering country is at about 10,000 feet, brisket disease is a concern. "We

used to lose about six or eight calves every year on the mountain and now we're down to losing one or maybe two at the most," Ty explains.

And the bulls have done well. The elevation doesn't seem to affect them at all, Ty says. Plus, there's been no trouble with the Hereford bulls breaking down.

"We have some trouble with black bulls breaking down, breaking their penises," Ty says. "We've had probably 12 different Hereford bulls and never had a problem as far as breeding."

The Hereford bulls have made a difference in weaning weights as well, Ty says, despite some hard years. "A big thing for us, that I've noticed, is even though we've had some real up and down years weather wise, our calves have been getting about 10 lb. heavier every year for the last several years, regardless of the conditions. We've had a couple pretty tough years but our calves have performed every year."

It's important to note that the red baldie calves have been exceptional. "We breed those black cows and get a handful of red baldies out of them every year," Ty explains.

"And those calves are above average

weight wise. I was a little bit nervous that we might jeopardize a little bit of our weaning weight and we haven't at all. It's been good."

#### Hereford-influenced longevity

And the most important benefit to Ty will pay dividends well into the future: cow longevity.

"The main advantage to those Hereford bulls is our cows' longevity. The baldie cows we had before were our older cows, and (when I returned to the operation) they were our 9- and 10-year-old cows. So what we're after is no trouble, in terms of elevation and things like that, and then cows that will do it for us again and again. We want to raise cows that will live and raise good calves for us till they're 10, 11 years old."

Ty says the straight Angus cows just didn't last. "We were losing 70% of what we had by the time they were 7 or 8 years old."

Even though Ty is a few years away from seeing just how long the Hereford-sired cows will last, he is sticking with Hereford bulls.

"We want to try to keep this (ranch) going so we can pass it on to our kids," Ty says. "That's our deal. Are we going to keep using Hereford bulls? I guarantee it. We've spent time finding really good bulls and they cost more money but they're just getting better and better for us. We will keep Hereford bulls in our female program. I'm sure of it." **HW**

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